Revelation of Plutonium diaster in USSR

4608. SHRI B. K. HARIPRASAD: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the greatest plutonium disaster in USSR was not revealed to the public causing great health hazards to the uninformed as reported by the Economic Times of the 3rd June, 1992; and

(b) if so, whether Government propose to assure that such accidents anywhere in the world and the country are factually reported to the people as a right to information?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY, DEPARTMENT OF ELECTRONICS AND DEPARTMENT OF OCEAN DEVELOPMENT AND MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PARLIAMENTARY AFFAIRS (SHRI P. R. KUMARAMANGALAM): (a) We have seen the report which appeared in "The Economic Times" of 8th June, 1992. Information about this incident was made known to scientists worldover, after 1988 and detailed presentation by USSR scientists were made at conferences/symposia in 1990-91. Our information is based on press reports or scientific symposia. We have no jurisdiction to investigate the matter.

(b) International Atomic Energy Agency has introduced an "incident reporting system" since 1988 and under this the member States report to IAEA incidents in civil nuclear facilities even though they may be minor in nature and may not involve any release of radioactive materials. All countries including the erstwhile Soviet Union have been sending reports to IAEA under this programme. Similarly, IAEA has introduced this year after a trial run of one year an "international nuclear event scale (INES)" for nuclear power reactors whereby reported incidents are put on a scale of severity (based on onsite and offside consequences, if any) ranging from 0 to 7, 7 being accident of Chernobyl type and O meaning only a degradation of safety system without any safety consequences. Incidents or accidents are then informed to the public indicating the scale and its significance. It may be noted that the recent incident at a nuclear power plant near Leningrad was similarly informed to public by IAEA. The Atomic Energy Regulatory Board (AERB) which is an independent body entrusted with the task of regulating the safety aspects of nuclear facilities in India actively participates in the above system. Through sophisticated global monitoring systems in position, now even if an accident of radiological consequences is not revealed by the country concerned, it would be known through the monitoring systems of the other countries. In fact, when the Chernobyl accident happened, before the erstwhile Soviet Union revealed it, the other countries came to know of it through their monitoring systems and made it public.

Decline in production of Fertilizers

4609. SHRI RAMDAS AGARWAL: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the total fertilizer production during April, 1992 at 6.65 lakh tonnes was 20 per cent lower than the 6.77 lakh tonnes produced during April, 1991 and that in the case of phosphatic fertilisers it was from 78 per cent to 68 per cent during this period; Financial Express issue 'Investment Week' July 27, August 2, 1992 refers;

(b) if so, the reasons for decline;

(c) whether Government have drawn up any list of foreign companies from which our fertiliser units can choose technology, if so, the details thereof country-wise;